Safety On The Road

Seatbelts And Airbags

An air bag is not a substitute for a seatbelt. You must always use your seatbelt and shoulder harness together with air bag protection.

The goal of any driver is to avoid collisions altogether. In fact, crashes do happen. Seatbelts and air bags make it possible to survive collisions that could have otherwise resulted in serious, if not fatal, injuries.

A seat belt should be worn with the lap portion placed flat across your lap, as low on the hips as possible. The reason for this placement is to spread the impact across the sturdy hip bones rather than across the soft abdomen. The shoulder part of the seatbelt should come directly over the bony shoulder area and down across the torso. It should fit comfortably but snug enough to hold you in place during a collision.

While seatbelts are designed to fit comfortably, there are differences in comfort level. When shopping for a vehicle, take the time to check the seatbelts for comfort and ease of buckling up. If seatbelts are comfortable and convenient, riders will be more inclined to use them.

An air bag is not a substitute for a seatbelt. You must always use your seatbelt and shoulder harness together with air bag protection.

You need your seatbelt to protect you from being thrown around the car and to help you maintain driver control, to keep you in the correct position if your air bag is deployed, and to keep you from being thrown out of the car, where your chances of being killed are 25 times greater.

A front air bag does not protect you in side, rear or roll-over crashes. A seat

belt is your best protection in these types of crashes. Front air bags are designed to protect you only in the event of a frontal crash.

Consult your vehicle owner's manual regarding seatbelts and airbags.

Keep your seatbelts in good repair. If they are damaged or do not work properly, have them repaired.

Be aware seatbelts are not effective for children below a certain age, size or weight. Young children and infants always should ride in an age-and-sizeappropriate child safety seat. A child who has outgrown a convertible child safety seat will need to ride in a booster seat for the vehicle's safety belts to fit properly. Children should always be safely buckled in the back seat.

The presence of airbags will also affect the safe placement of infant and child car seats. Never place an infant in the front seat of your car. Safely buckle the infant car seat in the back seat facing the rear view window. Studies have also shown that toddlers and young children, typically children ages 12 and under, should not be placed in the front seat of a car equipped with air bags.

Wear your seatbelt any time you are in a moving vehicle. This includes inplant vehicles, construction vehicles and any motor vehicles. Buckle up even for short trips in town — most accidents occur at low speeds near home. If your vehicle is equipped with an airbag, you must continue to wear your seatbelt to be adequately protected.

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